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RECOVERING THE "LOST RADIANCE" OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

BY

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A.B. University of California 1932

Thesis
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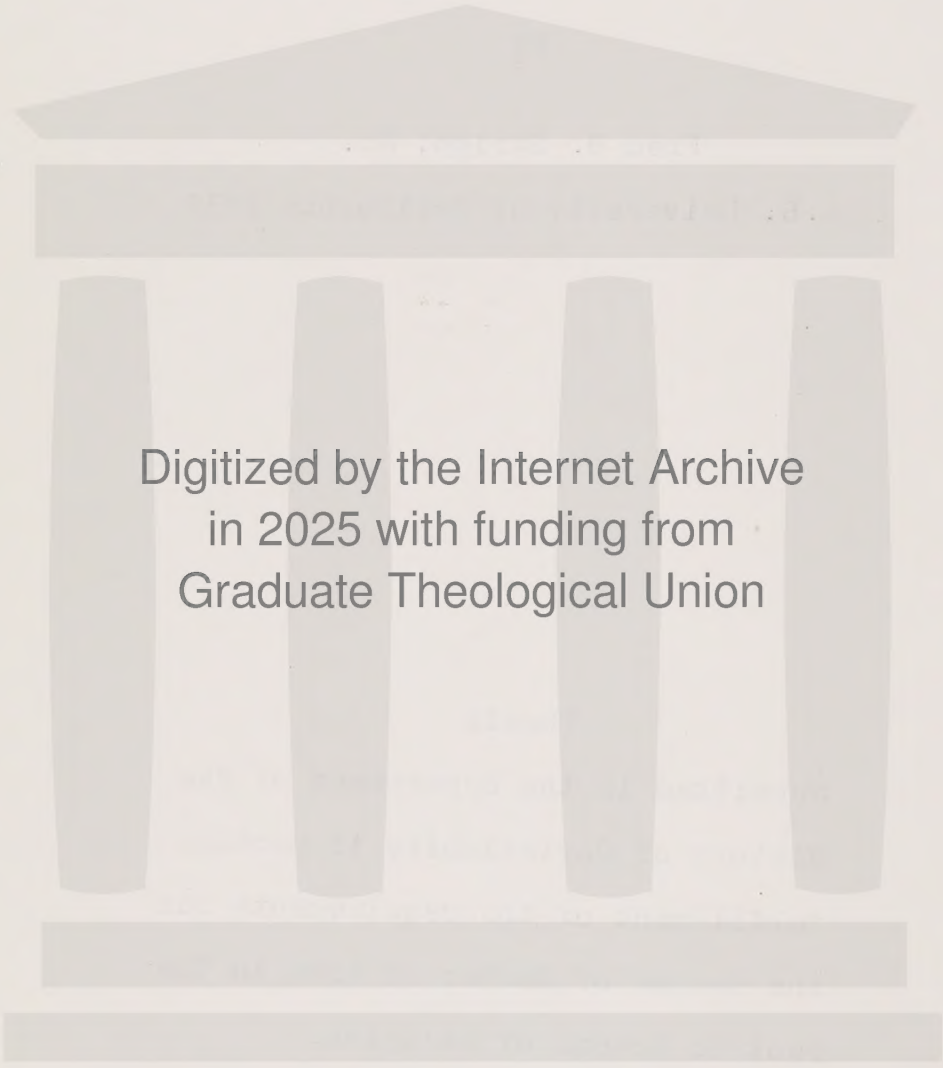

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THE PREFACE

This paper was suggested to the author after the reading of that immortal classic of literature, "Quo Vadis". Thrilled with the story of those Early Christians who conquered death through sheer moral sovereignty, I dreamed myself back in those days of bitter persecution and splendid triumph; back to the days when the story of Jesus was new and His apostles were telling it to the world for the first time; back to the days when the Cross was never contemplated by a Christian without emotion; back to the days when Church services were sometimes held in catacombs, and no one worried over Church attendance, finances, denominations, or dry sermons. Awaking from my dream to present day reality, it seemed a pity to have to leave all the bright jewels of that day of Christianity's dawn and return to my own day and age that seems so far removed from the high adventure and the incomparable joy that they knew. What have we done to the Nazarene here in this Twentieth Century? Can it be that we are platting another thorny crown for His head? We seem to be missing His way and our steps in Christianity appear to have wandered far off the path which those revered Christians of the Earliest Christian Era trod.

Out of this musing and day-dreaming, followed by thinking and reading and study, comes the present paper in its threefold division: First to consider awhile (1) THE GEMS IN HIS EARLIER CROWN, then (2) HIS MODERN CORONET OF THORNS, and finally (3) HIS DIADEM OF THE FUTURE.

DEDICATION

To my Father and to my Mother,
from whose lives and loves
shines the radiance belonging
to True Christians of any age.

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CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE GEMS IN HIS EARLIER CROWN

One of the brightest gems in His earlier crown was the lofty courage and willingness to suffer persecution and martyrdom that was shown by many of the Early Christians. This is one of the strangest mysteries of History; men, women, and children enduring the most unspeakable physical tortures rather than deny or betray their Christ!

It was not enough that they should suffer mental persecution at the hand of false rumor, which often had them painted as a sect that practiced unbridled license, cannibalism of their own infants, worshipping a donkey's head, being irreligious atheists and sacreligious traitors, --but in addition, the cruelest physical tortures were many times inflicted upon these innocents. "Nay, even new kinds of death were contrived, so that covered with the skins of wild beasts they were torn by dogs; many were affixed to crosses or consumed by the flames, and many were saved so that when daylight had faded, they might be burned to serve as nightly illumination. Afterwards the religion was forbidden by the laws and Christianity was rendered illegal by public edicts." *

Thus did they encourage the people who were attempting with pure hearts and ready hands to cleanse the world of the very evils which the world credited them with practicing, and which the Roman part of the world practiced too freely and all too often without a twinge of personal or national conscience.

The unbounded courage and sacrificial devotion of so many

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* Sulpicius Severus, Sacred History, II, 28, 29

Christians, however, in time proved the fallacy and injustice of these accusations and persecutions. "For what man who is fond of pleasure or is intemperate and who counts it good to feed on human flesh could welcome death that he might be deprived of his pleasures, and would not rather strive to continue indefinitely the present life and escape the notice of the rulers, instead of giving himself up to be put to death?" *

It is no small thing for an individual to cut his life short because he stands for an unpopular principle. Life must have been even sweeter to a Christian who knew deep religious joy than to a Roman who reveled in drunkenness, pastry gorging, and sexual excesses. For to do good to others is to make life interesting and to find peace for the soul. To glorify God is to enjoy Him. That was the spirit of the majority of the Early Christians. But to constantly think about selfish passions and desires is to make life artificial and boring in the long run and to cramp and darken the soul. Substituting Mammon and Nero for God is to be unhappy. That was the spirit of too many early Anti-Christians. But the latter were long in the majority and hence the first Christians held principles which were unpopular,--unpopular enough to call for torture and martyrdom unless they were renounced. And it was no small thing to undergo the persecutions prepared by the fiendish mind which hated any light that threatened to break in upon the squalor and filth in which

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* Justin Martyr, Apology, II, 12

it was content to wallow.

It is a very big thing, moreover, when one is cutting his life short at the hands of a polluted and bitter persecutor, to repeat the words and attitude of Jesus under persecution, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus assures us that such was the case with these Christians; "They love all men, and they are persecuted by all. They are reviled, and they bless; they are insulted, and they respect. Doing good they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice as if they were thereby quickened by life. In a word, what the soul is in the body, this the Christians are in the world." *

If this quotation were said of an individual rather than of a collective group, we would be thinking of the Christ as we read it. What higher tribute can we pay the Early Christians than to say that? And what brighter gem could they fashion for His crown than to show in their collective living the life that He lived for all men? This they did when they conquered their suffering by using it to exhibit unfaltering courage and the highest possible personal sacrifice. They lived close to Jesus and were generous with their love and with life itself as was the King whose crown their jeweled lives adorned.

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* The Epistle to Diognetus, Douglass Series of Christian Greek and Latin Writers, Volume V, page 87

A second gem which blazed in radiance from the crown these first Christians fashioned for their Saviour was the remarkable gospel of salvation to all men. And this gospel of hope and promise fell upon the ears of folk who were living in the core of a decaying civilization.

Though there was no great Christian campaign for the emancipation of the slaves of that period, it is still a fact that Early Christianity offered to these slaves a different kind of freedom, salvation that did not concern itself with political independence or social equality, emancipation from the shackles of fear and hopelessness and despair. Is it any miracle that slaves who had known nothing but brutality, scorn, cruel toil and torture, work without pay or commendation, no bright future to yearn for, should welcome a gospel that offered the promise of beauty, love, peace, and release from worldly care and toil, and a blessed region to cross over to from this life? And this was no gospel of idle dreaming and artificial fancy; they "got" it. It was very real to them, and in it they found the peace that passed their poor human understanding. They were happy as they went about their former tasks and carried their familiar burdens. Pain was a blessing with Christ to share it. They used their suffering and ill-treatment as steps on which to climb over the rough places in the path of life on the way to the goal that shines at the end of every straight, hard pathway. And all this was

something that could not have been had Christianity made their lives easy and free from tests and trials.

The treatment of the slave was one indication of the decadent era of human history the Early Christian invaded with his gospel of salvation. Angus tells of Tacitus' record of the slaying of six hundred slaves because their master had been assassinated; of Pollio who amused himself by feeding his fish with the mutilated bodies of slaves; of Marcus Aurelius who classed slaves with animals; all of this helped to provide a rotten place for the penetrating light of Christian salvation, bringing the only real happiness man can know.

The numbers of slaves possessed and sold in this period is almost bewildering to a modern who knows anything about equality and democracy or individual rights. After the victories of Marius, enough Cimbri and Teutons were sold into slavery to double the entire population of our city of Berkeley, California. In the insurrections of Spartacus enough slaves were executed to match the enrollment of the University of California. The Roman Empire in its entirety boasted enough slaves at one time to populate half of modern United States. One individual, Scaurus, owned a regular little city of slaves, about 8000, all by himself; and any Roman who was so poverty stricken as to possess as small a number of slaves as Jesus had disciples was a pauper. * And remember that these slaves had no rights, that the master

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* Samuel Angus, The Environment of Early Christianity, page 38

could torture, maim, and crucify them for the slightest error. If a master was killed, the entire household of slaves might be executed. At a word from the master the slaves could be released to the amphitheatre for gladiatorial combat. Among his younger female slaves the master could have all the sexual privileges of a sultan in a harem. Even Roman matrons were known to indulge in shameful intercourse with their slaves. And the only revenge the slave knew was to go as far as possible in the undermining and softening of his master. Since both were eager that vice and licentiousness be indulged in at the expense of the other, the result was a tremendously dangerous moral situation arising from the ownership and treatment of slaves.

The stage had its part in the moral decay of the period as it sought in its way to provide novelty in sexual shocks and degraded gods and men alike for amusement, applauding vice, ensnaring the virgin with the clever lover, involving the father and son with same prostitute, showing obscene gesture and parading scenes of adultery, cheating at love, and in many of these scenes using almost nude female players. Thus did the stage contribute to the general moral landslide, seeking to lure its patrons with the basest sex farces drama has ever known.

If the stage was shocking, the amphitheatre was overwhelming! In no chapter of the history of morality do we find so complete a collapse of morality and such a dearth of com-

passion and brotherly love as this period presents. Men have read with wonder and incredulity these strange pages out of the past, finding stories of gladiators fighting to the death by the hundreds, sometimes by the thousands, records of pygmies fighting for novelty, of women killing one another to amuse the sated populace, of starved, ferocious animals turned out on the arena with unarmed humans as their victims. Century after century thrilled to these unnatural moral passions and excesses in blood lust. It is a strange irony that in Rome, the city which has given so much to civilization, that the largest visible monument of that early day is the Colisseum.

Immorality was not confined to the stage, amphitheatre, or the victimizing of slaves, for the general public in too great a degree accepted loose morals as the common thing. In fact, men who have been raised to the heights of greatness descended to the depths of morality in that day. Pericles was not ashamed of his infamous Aspasia; Socrates publicly visited Theodota in the company of his disciples; Demosthenes lent his eloquence to acclaim the hetairai above wives; and vices we scarcely speak about now were widely practiced, even by such notables as Julius Caesar, Antoninus, Hadrian, and Trajan. * Prostitution seemed only a normal necessity to these people. Courtesans abounded and were honored far more highly than the ordinary wives as a general rule, it being the practice to consort in public with the hetairai, famous for clever speech and feminine ways, while the ordinary wives

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*Samuel Angus, The Environment of Early Christianity, 44, 45, 50

stayed at home to rear the children. Sexual irregularity to us was in too many cases the common thing to them. And though there were a great many examples of constancy in those old days, they cannot redeem the blackness that was all too prevalent in their moral color scheme.

Slavery, cruelty, and immorality had a helpmate in their work of decay in the person of poverty. Dickey opines that in no other era of history were so many humans exposed to such bitter poverty as during the centures prior to the birth of Christianity. This was due largely to tne vast supply of slave labor, displacing freemen and making strikes powerless. It was also due to the desire of the country folk to get into the big cities, starting agriculture on a toboggan down hill. The government, furthermore, controlled the laborer absolutely and the employer had an uncontrolled upper hand in dealing with his workers. Taxation without representation or permission was merciless, for the court and its ruler must have unlimited luxury, and the government became more costly with every war, every conquest, every territorial acquisition. The masses lived in degredation and despair, and even the free distribution of food by the government was not sufficient insurance against wholesale starvation. *

If misery and despair fell to the lot of the lower classes, and if national conquests and civil wars wiped out the middle classes, the lot of the upper classes was, in many ways, the most unhappy of all. Apathy and satiety characterized this

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* Samuel Dickey, Some Economic and Social Conditions of Asia Minor Affecting the Expansion of Christianity, a chapter in Studies in Early Christianity, edited by S. J. Case.

group, for one thrill after another had lost its attraction, and with the joy and zest of life gone, personal annihilation seemed preferable to the nausea of disgust. Suicide was thus a very common form of death.

Is it any wonder that the gospel of salvation to all men coming from the heart of the Christ and the throne of God and told from the lips of the Early Christians was a gem in His earlier crown? Salvation for this life and the life to come was promised to confessors of Christ and the promise fell on ready ears among humans who suffered from having too much or too little, or from having whatever they had polluted and poisoned in this strange age of poverty, slavery, cruelty, and immorality. The promise fell on the ears of men and women, masters and slaves, Jews and Syrians, Greeks and Romans, rich and poor, intellectual and illiterate, cultured and uncouth. The work these Early Christians performed in their effort to bring a gospel of salvation unto all men in their decaying civilization was truly a gem in the crown of the King of Kings.

The earliest crown that the Saviour wore bore another gem that may well be desired for His diadem of the future. This was the jewel that signified unity, harmony, solidarity, in the Early Christian fellowship. Men and women with mutual love for one another, with a common hate for the ungodly practices of the time, with the same constant threat of persecution hanging over each and all, craving peace, sympathy, security, and fellowship, found it a human urge and a divine consolation to be very close to one another in the brotherhood.

Within the fellowship of one church was found what was in essence an early forerunner of the labor union, for labor was upheld as both a right and a duty. All must work to eat and each must have a place to work that he might eat. Without question the brother in the church who was unemployed asked for work just as he might volunteer for any type of service or duty, and similarly without question the church gave the brother his task that he might earn his daily bread just as it would insist on any right or privilege for him. Within the fellowship of all the churches was found a definite appreciation of the work of the Kingdom of God in all places, and the larger churches gladly relieved the distress of the smaller churches. There was no thought of loaning or borrowing, for all were working to the same end--the bringing of the Kingdom of God to earth--and just as the vision of each and all was broad and prophetic, so were contributions generously sent and gratefully accepted. Among the members of one church,

and Among the members of all churches was a common bond more powerful than nationalism, a common zeal more noble than patriotism, and a common aim so highly to be preferred above imperialism. Their corporate worship led them to a very real and vivid feeling of God's presence; their teachers and preachers gave them strength to stand united in the face of enemies; comradeship made it possible to maintain their lofty moral and religious standards; in bitter hours of grief and persecution their common love and sacrifice preserved them from despair; their Holy Communion gave them in group consciousness new strength and power to live, to suffer, to die, to triumph! "There has probably never existed upon earth", says Lecky, "a community whose members were bound to one another by a deeper or a purer affection than the Christians in the days of the persecution." *

Living, serving, loving, suffering, dying, conquering,--together--the Early Christians kept a third gem shining brightly in the earlier crown of Him who taught them to love one another.

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* W.E.H. Lecky, History of European Morals, Volume I, 450

When Jesus blessed the pure in heart with a promise that they should see God, when He urged husband and wife to be constant in union and love, when He received little children, when He likened the relation of God to men as a beautiful family relation of children to a Heavenly Father, He prepared the setting for the fourth gem in His earlier crown, personal purity and family loyalty. The Early Christians put the gem in its place and caused it to shine with a redeeming light through the lust and dark depravity of the personal and family immorality of their contemporaries.

Throughout the story of "Quo Vadis" the chapters alternate between the abject filth of the Roman and the lofty purity of the Christian. The striking is so vivid and realistic and there is so much truth, if not historical fact, therein, that one closes the book with an exalted feeling of purity's triumph over licentiousness.

After a very revealing account of the author's idea of a typical orgy in the palace of Nero telling of the drunkenness of the guests, the lewd spectacles among nobles and entertaining slaves, the foolish things the wine drugged men and women were doing, Sienkiewicz closes a chapter thus:

"The greater number of the guests were lying under the table; others were walking with tottering tread through the triclinium, while others were sleeping on couches at the table, snoring, or giving forth the excess of wine. Meanwhile from the golden network, roses were dropping and dropping on those

drunken consuls and senators, on those drunken knights, philosophers, and poets, on those drunken damsels and Patrician ladies, on that society all dominant as yet but with the soul gone from it, on that society garlanded and ungirdled but perishing." *

At this drunken feast Vinicius the haughty Augustian had sought to possess the Christian virgin, Lygia, but the bestial drunkard was thwarted by her giant servant, Ursus. Later this once proud and vile Augustian stands humbly in the presence of Peter and Paul to speak of his love for Lygia this:

"I have not known your religion much so far. A little from you, a little from your works, a little from Lygia, a little from conversations with you. Still I repeat that it has made some change in me. Formerly I was fond of pleasure; the other night I fled from the pond of Agrippa, for the breath was taken from me in disgust. I am disgusted by feasts, wine, singing, citharae, garlands, the court of Caesar, naked bodies, and every crime. When I think that Lygia is like snow in the mountains, I love her the more; and when I think that she is what she is through your religion, I love and desire that religion." **

History bears out the contrast found in the story of Sienkiewicz, for the historians agree that sexual irregularity was taken for granted too often in the whole region of Rome, while purity was quite universally sought among Christians.

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* Henry Sienkiewicz, "Quo Vadis", Chapter VIII

** Ibid, Chapter XXXIII

Divorce was so common in Rome that Seneca tells of women who reckoned their age by the number of their husbands rather than by the consuls; Juvenal speaks of a woman who had eight husbands within five years; St. Jerome refers to a wife who was married to her twenty-third husband, she herself being his twenty-first wife; Tiberius found it necessary to make a special law prohibiting women of noble birth from enrolling as prostitutes. The harems of female slaves, the voluptuous games of Flora, the audacious indecencies of the stage, the exposure of both sexes at public baths, the obscene paintings exhibited everywhere, the licentious literature, and the general low value placed on human life as manifested in war and sport and slavery and suicide--all combined to produce a depth of moral depravity rarely equalled in human history and never surpassed. *

It was in these gutters of filth that the Early Christians sought to bring the flushing, cleansing waters of purity. These followers of Jesus were unchangeable in their stand against sexual irregularity and their literature is filled with warnings and denunciations against licentiousness and lust. The single standard was divine law to them. The only ground for divorce was adultery and second marriages were regarded/as by some adultery and usually forbidden.

Women came into their own with Christianity's advent. They were given full church membership and proved to be devoted workers. Their position was in marked contrast to

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* Samuel Angus, The Environment of Early Christianity, 49-50
Kirby Page, Jesus or Christianity, 66-67

that of their pagan sisters.

Childhood was given love and consideration now in much higher degree and Christians regarded abortion and infanticide as murder. Infanticide was provided for in the legislation of Plato and Aristotle and actually passed in the laws of Lycurgus and Solon. Where once there had been a regular business of rescuing exposed girls for their enslavement as prostitutes, the Christians frowned on such practices and devoted tenderness and love to the little ones whom Jesus had shown such sympathetic consideration. "There can be little doubt", Lecky tells us, "that for nearly two hundred years after its establishment in Europe, the Christian community exhibited a moral purity which, if it has been equalled, has never for any long period been surpassed." *

Purity for the individual and loyalty to family ties came as a blessing amid barbaric Roman vileness and the free love that blackened the good and true in Rome. Women and children were set upon a new level of love and respect, and men sought new levels of morality and religion for themselves as well. And as these things came to pass, the fourth gem in our crown that the Early Christians wrought for Jesus found its place and shone in brilliant testimony of its makers.

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* W.E.H. Lecky, History of European Morals, Volume II, 11

The last gem in our crown of precious stones is the rejection of violence and war for the practice of love and sharing.

As a group the Christians denounced the use of force and the practice of war. As individuals the Christians after conversion renounced military service and with few exceptions did Christians remain soldiers. Harnack lists the following barriers to the Christians participating in war: "the shedding of blood on the battlefield, the use of torture in the law-courts, the passing of death-sentences by officers and the execution of them by common soldiers, the unconditional military oath, the all-pervading worship of the Emperor, the sacrifices in which all were expected in some way to participate, the average behaviour of soldiers in peacetime, and other idolatrous and offensive customs." *

Hatred and revenge were not part of the Christian's armor, but his most powerful weapon was the overcoming of evil with good. The success they had in their efforts are testified to in this comment of Justin Martyr from a letter to Emperor Antoninus Pius about 150 A.D. :

"Twelve men went out from Jerusalem into the world, and they were ignorant men, unable to speak; but by the power of God they told every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach all men the word of God. We who formerly slew one another not only do not make war against our enemies, but,

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* Quoted by Cadoux, The Early Christian Attitude Toward War, 105

for the sake of not telling lies or deceiving those who examine us, gladly die confessing Christ." *

There is a tremendous lot in that last sentence. Not only were the converts to Christianity completely cured from warring against their enemies, but they even went so far as to die for their belief without raising a hand, much less a sword, in their defense. Christ evidently meant something to men who could and would do that. Apparently an unprecedented example inspired them to unprecedented actions. Following a man who refused to lead his people against their oppressors as the Military Messiah was expected to do and who refused even to allow one of His dearest disciples to draw a sword in His defense, they showed the world how completely and undeniably the weapons of love conquer hate and force whenever they deserted war and died in martyrdom with words of love on their lips for their executioners, whenever they saw their own wives, children, loved ones, raped, tortured, martyred in the persecutions.

The Early Christian was no mere passive sufferer, however, great as his patience, faith, and spiritual stamina had to be for that; he was committed to a very active policy of love and sharing.

The Apology of Justin Martyr concludes a description of Christian Worship thus: "Those who are well-to-do and willing, give as they choose, each as he himself purposes; the collection is then deposited with the president, who succours

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* Justin Martyr, Apology, XXXIX

orphans, widows, those who are in want owing to sickness or any other cause, those who are in prison, and strangers who are on a journey." *

Tertullian speaks of the monies deposited in Christian stewardship as the "deposits of piety, which are not expended upon banquets or drinking-bouts or useless eating-houses, but on feeding and burying poor people, on behalf of boys and girls who have neither parents nor money, in support of old folk unable now to go about, as well as for people who are ship-wrecked, or who may be in the mines or exiled in islands or in prison--so long as their distress is for the sake of God's fellowship, and they themselves entitled to maintenance by their confession." **

Adolf Harnack gives ten different varieties of benevolent distribution of Christian funds:

1. a general fund for alms giving in special cases,
2. the support of teachers and officials,
3. the support of widows and orphans,
4. the support of the sick, the infirm, poor, and disabled,
5. the care of prisoners and those languishing in mines,
6. the care of poor people needing burial,
7. the care of slaves,
8. the care of those visited by great calamities,
9. the churches furnishing and insisting on work,
10. the care of brethren on journeys and of churches in poverty or any peril. ***

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* Justin Martyr, Apology, C. LXVII

** Tertullian, Apology, XXXIX

*** Adolf Harnack, Expansion of Christianity, Volume I, 190

Enlarging on some of these points, Harnack quotes Dionysius on the plague in Alexandria: "The most of our brethren did not spare themselves, so great was their brotherly affection. They held fast to each other, visited the sick without fear, ministered to them assiduously, and served them for the sake of Christ. Right gladly did they perish with them. Indeed many did die, after caring for the sick and giving health to others, transplanting the death of others, as it were, into themselves. In this way the noblest of our brethren died, including some presbyters and deacons and people of the highest reputation. Quite the reverse was it with the heathen. They abandoned Those who began to sicken, fled from their dearest friends, threw out the sick when half-dead into the streets, and let the dead lie unburied." He further quotes Lactantius as the alludes to the burial of the poor: "We cannot bear that the image and workmanship of God should be exposed as a prey to wild beasts and birds, but we restore it to the earth from which it was taken, and do this office of relatives even to the body of a person whom we do not know, since in their room humanity must step in." *

Too much attention was paid to prisoners languishing in the mines and Licinius even passed a law that no one was to show any kindnesses to prisoners or supply with food those who were starving to death.

Because the Early Christians took Jesus seriously, we can look back today at the fifth gem in His earlier crown and know

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* Adolf Harnack, Expansion of Early Christianity, Volume II, 212, 206.

that Christians of that day substituted love and sharing for prejudice and war.

We have considered awhile the GEMS IN HIS EARLIER CROWN, seen that their lustre was due to the life and love of one after another of those early disciples of Jeus, and now with a sense of regret and of shame, we must look at the modern circlet that crowns the head of the Master and sadly acknowledge that we have replaced the five radiant gems with a like number of spiked spines in HIS MODERN CORONET OF THORNS.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

HIS MODERN CORONET OF THORNS

INDIFFERENCE

When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged Him on a tree,
They drave great nails through hands and feet, and made
a Calvary;
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His wounds
and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed Him by
They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die;
For men had grown more tender, and would not give Him pain,
They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them for they know not what they do",
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him through
and through;
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to
see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary.

G. A. Studdert Kennedy

One of the sharpest, most painful thorns in this modern crown we press down upon the head of Jesus is the thorn of indifference.

Where the Early Christians exhibited lofty courage and willingness to suffer persecution and martyrdom, the Modern Christians too often show an appalling indifference to the precepts that were close to the heart of Jesus, the things that He and His early followers lived for and died to defend. When this statement is made in one form or another, certain of the present day Christians come back with the rejoinder that in case of a modern persecution Christians would be found who would endure torture and martyrdom just as faithfully as those of an earlier day. Perhaps it is true that some could be found who would suffer martyrdom and go bravely through disgrace, pain, and death to stand for the principles of Jesus, but how very many denying Peters would insist that they never knew Him? Perhaps we need a modern persecution, we are in need of one to purge our ranks and leave fewer but truer Christians to tackle the tasks of the world. Granting that we do need a modern persecution, we are in little danger of getting it as long as our present indifference on the subject of Jesus' radical idealism controls us.

When Early Christians were persecuted, it was because they lived too nearly like the man who was crucified, and we hardly need worry about being caught doing anything like that.

We must first live our Jesus way so completely and convincingly that we become dangerous to the status quo and then we can expect our persecution, but in too many cases when individuals have tried to actually be Christian, the first lash of persecution from a selfish and conservative society drives them scurrying back to their holes to find the more pleasant rest and peace of drowsy indifference.

Something has happened over the stretch of years that separate the zealous Early Christian from the all too often apathetic Modern Christian that has caused the change. It is true that the earlier ones were closer to Him and the message was fresh and unpolluted. I had a little boy in my Sunday School class name as his first wish in a class discussion on first wishes that Jesus could come back to us in the flesh and live with us, walk with us, talk with us, answer our questions, strengthen our faith, bring us into close communion with our God. It was easier for those who knew Him or knew others who had known Him to love Him and worship Him, because of the freshness of His purity, strength, love, and courage, than for us whose pictures of Him have been marred by religious wars, theological battles, corruption of the ecclesiastics, and persecutions by Christians in the name of Christ. The years have brought out the human in us, where the newness of the thing brought out the divine in them. But Jesus is the "same yesterday, today, and forever", and if we can recover some of their zeal and overcome some of our indifference,

these rather distasteful contrasts which are dealing with the best in them and the worst in us may be of some value to the Kingdom we are seeking to establish.

If we may trust the testimony of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Eusebius, Dionysius of Corinth, Hippolytus, Lucian, Lactantius, Tatian, and others of that day, the needs of humanity served as a bugle call to duty for the Early Christians *, but in our own day there seems to be a debate on as to whether the Social Gospel should be part of our Christianity or not.

It certainly is known to Christians by their very force of numbers that their voice in the controlling of public opinion on almost any matter could swing the decision in the direction they desired. If they were definitely and seriously to decide to eliminate poverty, crime, or war, if they would not rest until they had forced public opinion to demand public action, then right here in America, for example, half of the people--united by a common purpose, driven by a common ideal, and driven toward a common goal--could certainly do something with the other half, many of whom are only waiting for leadership to come before they will fall in line and follow. If the ideals of Jesus were applied, poverty, crime, and war would furnish excellent objects for the practical application of said ideals until they had passed slowly but surely from the center of the stage into the background and thence into a silent exit. But such is not the case! And if something

* See "The Gospel of Love and Charity" in Harnack's "Expansion of Early Christianity", Volume I, 181

could be done and at least a very strong and revolutionary change effected in each of these evil fields, and yet is not being done, is not that a form of indifference?

We are not united; we are not zealous; we do not take our religion as a common group seriously enough, else this thing that could so surely be worked out if we gave our Christian service to it would by its challenge overcome our discord and indifference.

If we could only get the picture in our mind's eye that this deadening sin of indifference is thrusting a thorn into the kindliest forehead that ever knit the brow in feeling sympathy for mankind,--perhaps some of us might strike out to blaze the way that Jesus pointed out, fearless of consequence. This is our task.

The second thorn with which we pierce the Saviour's brow is neglect of salvation. The remarkable gospel of salvation to all men in a decaying world was carried with enthusiasm by the Early Christians; they knew they had something, something better than a cure for cancer or leprosy, something better than a magic potion to forget care and worry, something that every human needed, for Jesus had died on the cross to bring it--salvation from sin.

We still have the decaying world, but the only form of evangelism that brings it to men on any large scale is considered by many to be outworn and lacking in proper rational and emotional appeal for them. Liberal Christianity has with its critical sweep in the march toward progress in the light of truth brushed aside the old salvation story and the old evangelism and substituted--nothing! We are neglecting salvation to all men in our decaying world.

When our earlier disciples imparted their gospel of salvation to their fellowmen, it usually took root and men were saved; from that day on a process of change, development, redemption took place in the heart and life and soul of the convert. That salvation was in most cases not the end but the beginning. A start was made on the day of acceptance that set the feet on the right path and the power of that gospel of salvation kept the convert on that path, constantly growing stronger, purer, healthier as salvation continued to draw him toward the City of God.

But there came a day when a pagan warrior made a wholesale conquest of the Christian Church when his army was baptized as a unit. From that time on the monogram of Christ replaced the Roman imperial eagle on the shields of the military legions. "By 416 only Christians were accepted into the army." * And the cross of Jesus instead of a way of salvation became a magical sign for military conquest. We can see what happened to the once transforming power of the gospel of salvation if it could be applied in wholesale fashion to an army of soldiers whose very next act after accepting it was to go out and slaughter the men in an army who had not been saved. If salvation had "taken" in the ranks of the legions, war would have been forsaken and their only conquests from that day the spiritual conquests of salvation for other soldiers and fellowmen. This marks the turning point when salvation became confused with baptism and hence with a single act that once and forever saved the convert. Even today we can hear it insisted that once a person has accepted Christ, he is saved no matter what happens in the life from that moment on. I do not believe that this is the salvation Jesus died to bring. I think he lived and served and died to bring men a way of life that began with accepting Him and continued from then on through life "saving" him. We seem to have lost through the poisoning influence of the years that separate us from them, the gospel of salvation propagated by the

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* C.J. Cadoux, The Early Church and The World, 589

Early Christians, and our neglect of this gospel and its evangelization among men in a decaying world is a second thorn that tortures the temples of Jesus Christ.

A third thorn which adds its painful contribution to the modern coronet of thorns we have woven for the King is discordant denominationalism. The constant conflicts between the branches of His Church and particularly poignant among us Protestants, the Fundamentalism vs. Modernism fights, should make professing followers of Jesus ashamed of themselves.

"Liberal Christianity and orthodox Christianity are equally responsible for the world as it is. They equally stand sponsor for the capitalistic, militaristic system which now rules the world. They equally hate the pacifist-communist mode of life which Jesus preached and practiced and under the rule of which the Christian community carried on its work for the first four hundred years of its history and conquered the world. In those days of greatness there was a distinction between the church and the world; the world hated the church and the church defied the world. Today there is not the slightest distinction between the church and the world unless it be that the world is master and the church is slave.

"As Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem, seeing in its present sin its future downfall, so the sensitive soul stands aghast at the awful plight of western, so-called Christian civilization, foreseeing in its present evil its future disaster. And in view of this vision, the squabbling Fundamentalist and Modernist are as if they were two French nobles

in the days of the Revolution, quarreling about their pedigrees as they were riding in the tumbrel to the guillotine." *

Whatever may be true or untrue about theological beliefs, they should not absorb our attention so completely as to have us forget our social ethics altogether. Jesus should mean everything to both Fundamentalist and Modernist, to Baptist, Catholic, Nazarene, Disciple, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, Christian Scientist, Quaker, and Episcopalian; and He taught us to love one another, to take our love in service unto the least of these, His brethren and ours; He taught us to love our God and our neighbor and to lose our lives in usefulness for our fellowmen; and He promised that in that we should find the abundant life which He came to bring. I believe there is not much room for theological battle in this last sentence and if we magnify these truths and minimize our points of controversy, what limit to the things we might accomplish for His Kingdom!

But we are not magnifying these truths and we are not minimizing our differences. This is the shame of the churches. One Conservative, J. Gresham Machen, puts aside his cloak of Christianity for a moment to take a slurring cut at Catholicism and Liberalism in one sentence: "The church of Rome may represent a perversion of the Christian religion; but naturalistic liberalism is not Christianity at all. His own religion, he informs us, "is the great redemptive religion known as Christianity; the other is the naturalistic or

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* Quoted by E.C. Vanderlaan, Fundamentalism vs. Modernism, 109

agnostic modernism represented by Dr. Fosdick and by many Presbyterian ministers." * Machen, a Professor in Princeton Theological Seminary, is all for ousting these latter from "his" denomination. R.A. Torrey, Dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, also feels that these Liberals should form a new denomination while those who "accept the Bible as the inerrant word of God" should stay with him as the "old denomination." **

The Reverend G.W. McPherson makes a vigorous attack upon "the new theology" when he says, "Americans, I appeal to you, as you love your life, your children your country, humanity, God, arise like true men and drive from your schools of learning and from your pulpits the new German theology. Pull it down and throw it out. It is a vile, lying intruder. Drive it back to Germany and to Hell from whence it came." ***

The Modernists on their side spend too much of their time ridiculing the Fundamentalists and tearing down their theological castles with the same unchristian delight my small two year old sister exhibited after an unprovoked destruction of my carefully constructed block mansions when we were both very young and we had not yet succeeded in giving her an adequate appreciation of the feelings of others. Like my small sister, also, the Modernist walks away without leaving a new castle built in its place, and moreover without offering to help the Fundamentalist rebuild the old one on a new plan or build a new one. Having stood in the shoes of the architect who has

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* Quoted by E.C. Vanderlaan, Fundamentalism vs. Modernism, 366

** Ibid, 361

*** The New Theology and Old Theology and the Cross, 11

seen the thing that meant much to him rudely demolished, I can sympathize with the Fundamentalist when he is the recipient of destructive criticism which all too often comes in a rather mean and scornful attitude. It might be well for the Modernist to present his own castle first and see how it compares with that of the Fundamentalist. If it looks good enough to the latter, perhaps he will desert his castle and rebuild on the new plan. It is quite natural that he would resent being driven out of his cherished building without a new home into which he wants to move.

In the little city of 10,000 people where my parents live, there are a number of little churches, but in the Protestant group, four lead the way in numbers and influence, the Christian Church, the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist Churches. The Christian Church has a brand new $75,000 building that could adequately care for all four of these groups if they would cooperate in a Community effort, while the other sects are struggling along in plants that are not nearly so satisfactory or so conducive to worship. Furthermore this city has a very difficult moral problem to meet with a corrupt city government and a dividing line running across the main street to keep the Filipino and White people from engaging in one of their well-known race riots. Instead of united action to clean up this condition in the government and do Christian home mission work among the foreign element, they are competing with one another for members and refusing to try union in

their common task although it has been very seriously proposed more than once. This is the case in thousands of cities and towns in our nation and case after case of unchristian competition and failure to cooperate could be brought to witness against our discordant denominationalism.

So much more time and money are devoted to theological controversy and the perpetuation of denominational institutions than to the crusade against war, poverty, and race prejudice that we should blush in shame to call ourselves followers of the greatest social case worker of them all.

And because theological beliefs and not love for God and man are made the test of loyalty to Christ, the head of the Master is bleeding from this cruel spike that tears the flesh on His sensitive forehead because we have crowned Him with thorns.

We noted with admiration and respect the personal purity and fervent family loyalty of the Early Christian--a gem in His earlier crown. We note with shame and regret the all too prevalent loose morals and broken homes in "Christian" America--a thorn in His modern coronet.

Just picking up the evening newspaper without any premeditated selection of this particular issue, we find on the front page a picture of a brother handing his fiancee over to a younger brother and below is the explanation that the love conquest took one week; also on the front page is the account of a drunken husband who came home with his day's wages and rolling up a $5 bill that should have furnished food for the family, he swallowed it before the hungry wife and kiddies; another picture shows a sixteen year old "spitfire", daughter of a mother who is held for murdering her husband, who has just escaped from a detention home by beating a sixty year old matron over the head with a steel-plated shoe; a fourth article cites the story of a woman who pleads for divorce from a wife-beating husband and asks custody of their six year old daughter; in the very next column we are reminded of the farce made of marriage by Aimee Semple McPherson as we read of more trouble Dave Hutton has gotten himself into; and so we might go on through the columns to find to our shame and regret the loose morals and broken homes in "Christian" America. I know that a newspaper gives no statistical value in its spectacular headline and lurid column, but it does

condemn our public moral consciousness that these things could happen in such abundance and then be the journalistic meat the nation feeds upon night after night, day after day, and year after year without rising in indignation and demanding a clean-up in life and in newspapers, too.

If the Jesus ideal of personal purity and family loyalty was part of the equipment every boy and girl started out with, our nation would possess a finer citizenry of individuals and a happier collection of homes. Is the Modern Christian adult facing this challenge squarely? In my experience the boy and girl who have been taught and who live up to the high ideal of constancy and the dream of waiting for the one and only, are too few in number to make me think we are in any strong way living the Jesus way. If a fellow and and a girl would content themselves with the immeasurable thrill anticipation brings until they find the right partner and then know realization in true love, family life would be more permanent and beautiful, and the increased purity of the individual would change the life of the collective group in short order. But not enough of the churches are holding the Jesus ideal high enough; not enough of her leaders are standing out in strong relief as teachers and examples; the questions of sex, love, and marriage are not dealt with frankly and courageously and beautifully enough; and we have only ourselves to blame.

The newspapers, the lurid magazines with their sexy covers, the moving pictures with their distortions of love

and family relations, the dance, the automobile, the custom of starting and ending parties late,--all of these contribute in a post-war period of more than ordinary moral laxity to aggravate conditions of loose morality. Too many Churches and Churchmen are afraid to take much of a stand on purity and morality for fear they will lose members and financial support for unpopularity and "prudery", but until some of us do take such a stand and lose positions if need be, that fourth thorn will continue to press unmercifully upon the head that wears our modern crown of thorns.

Now for the last and "most unkindest cut of all", the thorn most cruel, most sharp, most poisonous of any that we force the "King of Kings" to bear in agony. Recall that we credited the Early Christian with rejecting war and violence for the Jesus way of love and sharing. Now let Economic Injustice, Race Hatred, Capital Punishment, Lynching, and War stride by as grim spectres of our modern day and as they pass, try to feel in our own brow the thorn that pierces Jesus, then magnify our pain by his multiplied love and sensitive sympathy for mankind, and we still have no real appreciative conception of the suffering this cruelest barb of all must cause the Shepherd of the sheep.

These five spectres, as they follow one another across our stage, constitute a collective indictment of those Modern Christians who have accepted war and violence and rejected the Jesus way of love and sharing.

1. Economic Injustice:

When we have testimony from experts that half of the 25,000 death list and three fourths of the million serious injuries in American industry could be prevented, we stand condemned as a Christian nation for enduring this needless industrial sacrifice on the altar of wealth and capitalism.

When we consider that life and security for the worker are just a gamble with accident threatening on one hand and unemployment on the other, are we even conforming to the old Pagan virtue of justice? Not to mention a virtue of love and sharing that came to mankind from a carpenter.

If the worker wants a wife, home, children, he must have them with the risk of unemployment staring him in the face. If it comes, a saloon is more attractive often than starved faces of wife and little ones; the will and muscles may become flabby; courage energy, independence give way to listless acceptance of the bread line. This is a reckless throwing away of the divine energy imparted to all human life.

The capitalist does not share this risk because of the favorable balance for him in seasons of busy markets to carry over in dull seasons. The worker does not have any surplus profits to balance his seasons for him.

Disease, malnutrition, fatigue, poisoning, slums, poor light, heat, sanitation, lack of play facilities, and general lack of education for personal and public health,--these are too often the heritage of the laborer's children. Hence the right to live is not only denied adults, but is impaired for their children. And all this is true in the country which is nominally under the influence of the man who came bringing the abundant life.

The contrast between the attitude of many laborers toward Jesus and their attitude toward the Chruch brings this spectre, Economic Injustice, out in rather marked relief:

"We believe that he was the great Teacher of social justice. The worker gives eager reverence to that teaching and to the Teacher, as being a sympathizer and fellow worker with him. "

"Unquestionably he would be with us. Was he not a workingman? Was it not the church of his day that preferred the charge against him, 'He stirreth up the people', which led to his crucifixion? Surely, he belongs to us and would be with us." *

"The workers feel that the church of to-day, like the church of the Master's day, is arrayed with the oppressors of the common people."

"The general sentiment among the workers is that the church is not in sympathy them, that it reserves its favors for the well-to-do and its frown for the poor devil who toils. This sentiment pertains generally, without regard to sect or creed." **

2. Race Hatred:

Here is a spectre that prods on War and Lynching and finds his most fiendish delight in seeing them at work. He toils incessantly with his poisonous prejudice, damnable national pride, false patriotism, and color intolerance. He keeps us from the Jesus way of love and sharing by himself, but it takes his allies, War and Lynching, to actually perpetrate the violence that climaxes his dirty work.

As I write, I can see in my room a picture of a kind and loving Galilean encircling a group of little children, one brown, one yellow, one red, one white, one black; they are close together for their attention is focused upon Jesus. Our second spectre would have little chance at our hearts if we kept our attention on Jesus, but Race Hatred has a powerful film which blinds us most effectively, and we cannot see our

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* Harry F. Ward, The Gospel for a Working World, 150

** Ibid, 135

Jesus and our brothers of other colors if we let our eyes dilate.

3. Capital Punishment:

I can think of many occupations that would be repellent to me. The work of ditch-digging, garbage-collecting, coal-mining, street-sweeping, animal-butchery,--none of these would appeal to me, and they very likely do not make a very strong appeal to our fellowmen who do them; but they are all honorable occupations and a man can feel that in his work he is doing a hard and unpleasant but very necessary and life-brightening one for others. But there is one occupation that under no circumstances could I be hired to take, and that is the work of the executioner, the man who springs the trap for a hanging, throws the switch for an electrocution, or turns on the gas for a more quiet strangling of one of society's victims. I would rather beg, starve, or die than to try to face my fellowmen in this world and my God in the next with this occupation behind me as a life-work.

Unless one is ardently and actively opposed to the whole system of Capital Punishment, however, one stands behind the executioner and sanctions every killing he performs as the tool of the state, and as accomplices for each crime, I believe we stand equally indicted or perhaps even more culpable than the man whose task in life is so utterly loathsome to me.

I have no figures to offer, no arguments about the deterrent effect of Capital Punishment, nothing to say about the

attitude of jurors in murder trials, nothing about miscarriages of justice, no plea about irresponsibility of murderers,--I have only this to say about the grim spectre of Capital Punishment, that in the light of the Christian Ideal he stands irrevocably condemned to oblivion. Uncompromising love toward all the children of God leaves no place for this spectre that substitutes violent death for redeeming love.

4. Lynching:

Because his lightning has struck in our own neighborhood so recently and so terribly, arousing the civilized to ask us whether California and her Governor are out of the Dark Ages or not, we are quite conscious of the spectre who walks along with Capital Punishment, indicting Modern Christian America. Stories of lynchings and mob violence are common to Christians in a nation where there have been an average of two lynchings a week over a 41 year period. There have been some savagely cruel and frightfully shocking sights perpetrated in the land of the free and the home of the brave, and perhaps none worse than in the state of that American who lived most nearly like Jesus--Abraham Lincoln, for Illinois has some ugly marks on her historical landscape which detract from the bright glory her most heroic son brought to her.

Here in California, we are prone to love Lincoln and Jesus when we are in our right minds, but the principles that guided them at all times absolutely forsake a mob bent on violent vengeance. Here in our state the whole mob was not at the scene of the recent San Jose crime; they were spread all over

the state. For on the day the pictures of two naked, strangled victims of the violent spectre, Lynching, were flashed across the pages of the press, I went through an entire day without having one solitary person agree with me that this lynching wasn't a good thing. From the smallest boys on my playground to some of my dearest Christian friends, I heard all day long that this was one of the best things that ever happened in America! Bad enough that the outrage could be perpetrated in a moment of mad mob psychology, but how alarming that so many in distant places and at a later time could so whole-heartedly endorse it! There is a long, hard road to travel in education and persuasion to enlightenment before this dread spectre leaves us to follow Christ in deserting violence for love.

5. War:

"The famous evangelist, Billy Sunday, began a prayer in the House of Representatives in January, 1918, with these words: 'Thou knowest, O Lord, that no nation so infamous, vile, greedy, sensuous, bloodthirsty, ever disgraced the pages of History. Make bare thy mighty arm, O Lord, and smite the hungry, wolfish Hun, whose fangs drip with blood, and we will forever raise our voices in Thy praise.' The supplicant had the satisfaction of hearing his prayer applauded by the House." *

Lyman Abbott published a book in 1918 in which he sought to justify the war as a modern crusade to make the world safe and peaceful for God's children, "The Twentieth Century Crusade".

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* Kirby Page, Jesus or Christianity, 237

Listen to him: "It is a disgrace to a noble profession to call the German officers soldiers or the German forces an army. They are in the strictest and most scientific sense of that term brigands, for they constitute a highly organized gang engaged in Highway robbery on an enormous scale. The armies of the Allies are in the strictest sense of that term 'officers of the peace'. They are 'fighting for peace'. They might well bear upon their banners the inscription, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God'.....I cannot understand those who think that Christianity has failed. These strangely blind skeptics can see the pitiless German horde raping, robbing, murdering, but they cannot see the followers of Christ carrying at the cost of their own lives, his message of succor to the poor, the captives, the blinded, and those that are bruised by oppression. I think Christianity has never been so triumphant as it is to-day." *

Newell Dwight Hillis, one of the renowned clergymen in the country, is quoted as saying in one of his numerous patriotic addresses to arouse the war fever in his countrymen: "Lovers of their fellow-men have finally become perfectly hopeless with reference to the German people. They have no more relation to the civilization of 1918 than an orang-outang, a gorilla, a Judas, a hyena, a tumbocrew, a scalping knife in the hands of a savage. These brutes must be cast out of society.....In utter despair, therefore, statesmen, generals,

* Lyman Abbott, The Twentieth Century Crusade, 33, 48

diplomats, editors are not talking about the duty of simply exterminating the German people. There will shortly be held a meeting of surgeons in this country.....These surgeons are preparing to advocate the calling of a world conference to consider the sterilization of the ten million German soldiers, and the segregation of their women, that when this generation of German goes, civilized cities, states, and races may be rid of this awful cancer that must be cut clean out of the body of society." *

Billy Sunday, Lyman Abbott, Newell Dwight Hillis,--none of these are "unknowns", tucked away somewhere in a little hamlet where there might be some excuse for hill-billy ignorance and backwoods feud-fighting, and hence some explanation for these unspeakable words of hate and savagery, nay worse than savagery, for savages may be excused on the grounds that they know no better; these men are supposed to be leaders for Jesus Christ!

I was four years old when the World War was declared. I remember that I had a collection of flags that came on small cloth patterns with a bar of candy, and one day Mother tells me, I got a new one. At the tender age of four I stuck it in my pocket without a word, walked home in silence, went directly to the fireplace and burned the new flag instead of adding it to my collection, for it happened to be the flag of Germany, and even at that age I had been trained patriotically to hate anything German, although I

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* Quoted by Kirby Page, Jesus or Christianity, 226

was myself one-fourth German and had a very dear old great-grandmother who spoke only that language and was the very embodiment of patience, sweetness, and love.

I also remember how the war hate for Germany blighted my theological concept of the Heavenly Father, for the capital letter G in the enemy nation had come to mean something so harsh, hateful, and fearful to me that for years after everytime I read the word, God, beginning with that same capital G, I had that harsh reaction from the early association with which my plastic little mind had been conditioned. Yet I was brought up in Christian nurture, without which I feel that I probably would never have entered the ministry. War propaganda is a very strange human phenomenon.

Christian families and Christian pulpits became in that war as in every war since Constantine--UNCHRISTIAN--singing hymns of hate, praying vengeful prayers, calling upon a Thunder-bolt-hurling God to smite the beastly enemy. And they said that Christianity had never been so triumphant!

Nations are swollen with armaments once again--only twenty years after the declaration of that war--and the next war is being glibly talked about on every hand. The great body of Christians who could be such a power in this nation to hinder war and the race for armaments and lead men into the "New Jerusalem where war shall be no more", are not using their influence to be that power against war. The Early Christian rejected war and placed in the earlier crown

of his Master a radiant gem; the Modern Christian accepts, encourages, or at least permits war preparation and places in the modern coronet of that same Master a bitterly barbed and hatefully poisoned thorn. This is our tribute to Jesus who taught us to love one another.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

HIS DIADEM OF THE FUTURE

BRING FORTH THE ROYAL DIADEM

All hail the power of Jesus name!
  Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
  And crown him Lord of all.

Let every kindred, every tribe,
  On this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe,
  And crown him Lord of all.

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng,
  We at his feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
  And crown him Lord of all.

Edward Perronet

We have been looking at contrasts as we considered awhile THE GEMS IN HIS EARLIER CROWN and HIS MODERN CORONET OF THORNS. We have purposely sought to find the "lost radiance" of Early Christianity and we have purposely sought to point out the dark places in Modern Christianity. Our purpose is to recover for this present day and project into the future that "lost radiance" of the past. Completing our trilogy of crowns, we come to the final circlet for the Saviour's brow, HIS DIADEM OF THE FUTURE.

The first gem we discovered in the first crown was the courage and sacrificial devotion of the Early Christians; the first thorn we found in the second crown was the indifference of the Modern Christians; the first precious stone I want to suggest to the Future Christians who create the third crown is <u>fearless</u> <u>living</u>.

Fearless living takes courage and sacrificial devotion and shakes indifference off. If Jesus was a radical and was treated with contempt and persecution because he was willing to live God's way, how can a true follower do less than risk the ridicule of his fellowmen, possible unemployment, loss of popularity, loss of respect, even loss of freedom and life itself, to stand fearlessly for the rights of his fellowmen and the dictates of his own conscience?

It is not easy to trust mankind implicitly; it is not easy to live brotherhood from day to day and still be popular and respected; economic powers do not welcome anyone into

the community who asks for worker's rights and tries to put over any love and sharing ideas; it is dangerous, too, to take Jesus seriously in the matter of overcoming evil with good. But "unless the Gospel is first lodged in the heart of the individual as a renewing and transforming power, it can have no healing for society as a whole." *

Society is inclined to treat those who rise too high above its standards too much the same as it does those who fall too far below. If it is our privilege to rise "too high above its standards", we must be ready to take the consequences, chin up, chest out, shoulders squared, eyes ahead, God inside, actively on the march in fearless living.

This is the first precious stone in His diadem of the future, FEARLESS LIVING.

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* Federal Council of Churches, The Present Crisis as a Summons to Spiritual Advance

The second gem in the early crown was the gospel of salvation in a decaying world; the second thorn in the modern coronet was the neglect of salvation in a needy world; the second precious stone I want the diadem of the future to have is a new evangelism.

I believe the new evangelism must be a dual salvation gospel, the reclamation of the individual life from selfish and materialistic living and the reclamation of the social life from selfish and materialistic living. Listen to the Call of the Churches in the "Present Crisis": "We are agreed that a renewed spiritual life for each of us as individuals must lead us straight out into the great social issues of our day, not away from them, and make us think of them in spiritual terms. Our experience of God proves its Christian character by the service it induces for others. The more deeply we become aware of the reality of God, the more we are impelled to test every aspect of our complex life by its conformity to His will. The more unclouded our discernment of the significance of Christ for ourselves and for the world, the greater is our compulsion to bring every realm of men's relationships under His influence. We cannot be interested in the salvation of individual personalities without at once being concerned about the slums that damn them or the unemployment that works havoc to the spirit of man no less than to his body." *

An evangelism that cleans up a man on the inside and

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* Federal Council of Churches, The Present Crisis

then sends him to clean up outside is the need for the future. Those who are reached must look within to set aright the individual relations with the demands of the Ideal of the Kingdom and will reach out in turn to help adjust social relations with the demands of the Ideal of the Kingdom. The individual and the social gospel will go hand in hand when the new evangelism is at hand. Salvation will not end with the change or conversion of a man; that will be but a beginning, a process to continue indefinitely in this world and the next "to help spread wide the white wings of God's 'good news' to the children of men". *

This is the second precious stone in His diadem of the future, THE NEW EVANGELISM.

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* Oswald W. S. McCall, Cardinals of Faith, 122

The third gem in the early crown was the harmony of Christian fellowship; the third thorn in our modern crown was the discord of denominationalism; the third precious stone for the diadem of the future may well be the unity of the spirit.

Again the Federal Council sounds the note: "We are agreed in regarding these tasks of the present hour as a clear summons to greater cooperation among all Christians. At a time when the spirit of cooperation is seen to be the keystone to recovery in our economic and our international life, the Christian churches should set the supreme example of cooperation. For cooperation is of the very essence of the Christian way of life. If our churches, committed to the ideal of brotherly cooperation and fellowship by the Gospel they proclaim, do not cooperate effectively, it is vain for them to preach that commercial and industrial organizations should do so." *

Matthew Arnold points out there are two things true of the Christian religion: "One is that men cannot do without it; the other, that they cannot do with it as it is." This ought to challenge us to a unity of the spirit to make it what it ought to be.

If we must differ in points of doctrine, if it is impossible to harmonize in theology, if our modes of worship and confession are bound to be distinct from one another, these things need not destroy the spiritual bond that binds

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* Federal Council of Churches, The Present Crisis

every Christian to the common task of saving the world. If a unity of the spirit can be realized and can replace denominational discord, we may yet realize another day in progress--the day when more time and money is spent not for denominational perpetuation but for the crusade against war, poverty, crime, and prejudice.

This is the third precious stone in His diadem of the future, UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

The fourth gem in the first crown was personal purity and family loyalty; the fourth thorn in the second crown was the prevalence of loose morals and broken homes; the fourth precious stone in the future crown could ideally be absolute purity.

Jesus was not content with the Mosaic "Thou shalt not", but offered the positive "Thou shalt". I prefer to think of purity in that positive rather than in any negative way. Purity in the legendary Galahad gave him the strength of ten and in our own day Modern Galahads are needed to bring a freshness and clean air into twentieth century life. We may do well to remind ourselves of the promise that the pure in heart are blessed, for they shall see God.

Because we desire as Christians a body, mind, and soul that will be pure, clean, strong, healthy, beautiful,-- a temple for God; because we desire to emulate the Master in purity and sacrifice; because we know it will aid us immeasurably in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth; because we can accomplish more physically, mentally, and spiritually as we represent Jesus before our fellowmen; because we desire in Christian love and marriage to be vibrant with clean physical manhood; we pledge to keep our bodies the temples they must be in His name, to be careful of sleep, to control our diet, to cleanse ourselves in exercise and refreshing water, and to spend time in study and prayer that we may find balance in health, intellect, spirit.

We desire, furthermore, as Christian men and women to preserve our physical and spiritual love, the love that unites a man and woman with one another and with God in the wonderful union that is above verbal description, pledge to exemplify loyalty to the high ideal that there is one man or one woman to whom we shall be united and for him or for her all of our love should be brought as a sacred gift that has been treasured in purity and shall thus always remain pure and beautiful when in love it is all given to the realized human ideal.

We want also that our children shall be early taught the beauties of love and marriage that they may desire Christ-like purity for their own love treasure through the years.

When we write the text and spirit of these pledges on our hearts, there need be little worry about our personal purity or our family loyalty. And once the Jesus purity gets into a number of Christian minds, the yellow journals, the lurid magazines with their sexy covers, the moving pictures with their distortions of love and family relations, the custom of starting and ending parties late, and of questionable dancing and automobile parking, --all these will find a quiet foe that works in the hearts of men and women against them until they will no longer be considered "just the thing".

This is the fourth precious stone in His diadem of the future, ABSOLUTE PURITY.

The fifth gem the Early Christians presented to Jesus was the rejection of war and violence for the acceptance of love and sharing; the fifth thorn the Modern Christians pressed down upon His head was the acceptance of war and violence and the indifference to love and sharing; the fifth precious stone in the crown the Future Christians must present the King is uncompromising love.

Uncompromising love will take care of the negative side--war and violence, as well as the positive side--love and sharing. Love must be uncompromising for God, for Jesus, for self, for conscience, for enemies, for foreigners, for neighbors, for criminals, for the poor and unfortunate, for all mankind.

Love always costs and Christians must be prepared to be bitterly rewarded in scorn, ridicule, indifference for their uncompromising love, for those who do not have that same high call to draw them upward are constantly seeking to drag down those higher up.

The birth of Uncompromising love must herald the death of Economic Injustice, Race Hatred, Capital Punishment, Lynching, and War. A new trail must be blazed and no obstacle must be forbidding enough to stop us. We cannot even compromise with Death, himself.

This is the fifth precious stone in His diadem of the future, UNCOMPROMISING LOVE.

The young man closed the book and leaned back in the easy chair to meditate,--what a glorious heritage those Early Christians have passed on, and we,--why we've left it almost untouched.

A vision of Jesus appears and a crown set with radiant gems bears witness to the lives and loves of those first followers of the King. He is pleased with them and with the crown they have fashioned for His humble brow, but even as the young man marvels at the beauty of it all, the crown begins to change its shape and the happiness on the face of the King changes to pain and agony,--why, there is no crown on His head! those are thorns, cruelly piercing the flesh, torturing that sensitive, gallant brow, and a coronet of thorns bears witness to the lives of the Christians of his own day, of whom he, himself is numbered. He cannot bear the sight and turns away, but he is irresistably drawn back. Now the vision is fainter, the crown is taking shape again and the triumphant countenance breaks into light once more as a diadem bears witness to the possible lives and loves of Christians like himself in the future.

The vision passes; he awakes, but not on the same world, for never again shall his life be quite what it was before he dreamed. The vision of the future was faint, but the crown was there, set with brighter stones than even the beautiful first crown, for its "lost radiance" had been recovered and made with new life and new love to shine even more radiantly on the brow of Jesus Christ for the sake of all mankind.

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